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V.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF SPIRITISM.

MODERN spiritism is an attempt to apply the inductive method to religion ; to make faith scientific ; to confirm the longings of the heart by the evidence of the senses. In thus submitting spiritism to the inductive method its friends forgot that to prove a religion would be to kill it—to transfer it from the emotions, where it belongs, to the intellect, where it can find no home. A religion proved, dies as a religion, and becomes a scientific fact, and would take its place side by side with astronomy and chemistry, with physics and geology, in the organized knowledge of men. Spiritists would, therefore, have been wiser if they had followed the example of one of the very greatest of experimental philosophers, the late Professor Faraday, of whom it was said that when he “entered his laboratory he shut the door of his oratory.” The security of religious beliefs consists in their keeping out of range. Religion, indeed, is between two fires : absolutely proved or absolutely disproved, it is destroyed ; disproved, it becomes a delusion, a negative fact of science ; proved, a positive fact, in both cases recognized by the intellect and appealing to it ; like the horizon it recedes as we go toward it—even the attempt to submit it to scientific study causes it to disappear. No religion on the globe is strong enough to bear the shock of its own demonstration.

That Christianity has not clearer and more precise historical evidence for its claims has been the experienced and oftentimes-uttered regret of apologists, and to supplement this defect by toilsome research has been the burden of the first scholarship of the world ; but it is the weakest point in Christianity that it is historically so strong ; its recent decline among the thoughtful corre-

sponds to the augmenting wealth of the testimony in its favor, and at this hour its hold, in all sects, is firmest among those who are most oblivious and most heedless of the arguments for its divine origin. If Christianity ever dies, it will be of excess of evidence; each addition of proof draws blood. If spiritism were content to remain a part of religion—an undemonstrated belief without attempting to demonstrate itself—it might stand, as a logical possibility (since science can have no deduction against it), as long as the Copernican theory.*

Spiritism was thus organized for failure. If successful in its object, the inductive proof of the claim that spirits manifest themselves to the human senses, its failure as a religion would be entire; for it would simply have made a new contribution to science. In this object it has, however, not succeeded, since all the once strange phenomena that have been relegated to the agency of spiritual beings can now in entire detail be elucidated by the established laws of the nervous system in health and disease. There is no fact or phenomenon relating to modern spiritism in regard to which, so far as is needful for the explanation of the delusion, physiology asks for more light. Modern spiritism is a tripod: its three supports being trance, the involuntary life, and human testimony.

He who has mastered the psychology of these three departments of knowledge has compassed not only spiritism, ancient and modern, but, in good measure, all the great delusions of history. By this it is not purposed to belittle in any way the importance or the difficulty of our theme, for the knowledge required to master these sciences is possible only to recent neurology, a field of science as yet occupied by only a small band of philosophers.

The trickery of spiritism, the least important of all the facts of its psychology, is already in a degree comprehended in its superficial relations even by the people; thus the delusion has been made to veer and tremble, but it awaits the removal of the three supports at the hands of Science to fall into entire destruction, carrying with it an army of major and minor untruths that have leaned upon it, and have been upheld by it, and must die in its company. It is

* This generation has also witnessed the failure of Comtism—another attempt to make a scientific religion; its aim being to prove religion deductively as that of spiritism was to prove it inductively. A religion, indeed, can not be made to order like a suit of clothes, it must be a growth, an evolution; the impulse and the force to make the change must come automatically from the living body of the people, and not from the experiments of science or the reasonings of philosophy.

ignorance of the nature and phenomena of trance, and of the involuntary life of which trance is the supreme expression, and the unscientific state of the principles of evidence as derived from human testimony, that made spiritism a possibility and a power in these modern days, just as ignorance of astronomy gave birth to astrology, of chemistry to alchemy, of general pathology to witchcraft.

Ten years ago trance was a realm as dark and mysterious and unexplained as chemistry in the sixteenth century ; the recent demonstration of the fact that it is a subjective, not, as the world had unfalteringly assumed, an objective state, is in its own sphere, and in its relations to our knowledge of the brain, a revolution as radical as the displacement of the Hipparchian by the Copernican theories of the universe.

If trance, the involuntary life, and human testimony, were understood universally as they are now beginning to be understood by students of the nervous system, there would not, could not be a spiritist on our planet ; for all would know that spirits only dwell in the cerebral cells—that not our houses but our brains are haunted.

Trance is a very frequently occurring functional disease of the nervous system, in which the cerebral activity is concentrated in some limited region of the brain, the activity of the rest of the brain being for the time suspended.

It matters not what is done to induce this state nor who does it, nor in what way, provided the brain be in a condition to enter it—physiologically or pathologically prepared for it ; there is not a fact, or shape, or influence, or phenomenon, real or professed on earth, in the air, or sky, that may not act as an exciting cause. It is a malady that comes when it is least expected, and most undesired, falling with impartial cruelty upon the plowboy, the scholar, and the man of affairs ; coolness of organization, wise judgment, in great concerns, rich and complex experience, shrewdness, incredulity, even the noblest scientific genius, insuring no exception.

Of all the myriad excitants of trance—the making of passes, looking at bright objects, an alarm of fire, the exhaustion of disease, etc.—none are so potent as the pretense of the supernatural, since no other claims are so calculated to act upon the emotions of awe, of reverence, of wonder, of expectation. The very possibility, or profession, or fear, or desire, or suspicion, of supernatural, of marvelous, of mysterious, of unusual or even out-of-the-way mundane phe-

nomena may excite instantly, or within but a few moments, in one psychologically or pathologically predisposed, the state of trance with its distinctive group of physical and psychical symptoms. Suspense is the strongest of human emotions, and in an ordinary *séance* the emotions are kept in constant suspense.

In trance man becomes an automaton; the coördinated action of the faculties that is called the will is displaced by a series of mental and muscular movements as purely automatic as the beating of the heart or the opening of a flower. In this state objective or subjective become confounded: there is, indeed, no true objective life; the brain absolutely creating objects, persons, experiences, or mutilating and transforming all impressions made upon it, according to what is repeated, or desired, or apprehended—the eye seeing what it looks for, the ear hearing what it wishes or fears.

Of all the maladies that distress mankind none are so speedily or powerfully contagious as trance: in an instant, or in a time too short to be measured, it may spread like flames in a dry forest, from one to another through a wide assemblage, until all shall simultaneously see and hear and feel and experience alike; individuality is swallowed up in a common ecstasy: a thousand brains, or tens of thousands, become as a single brain; and to none is the evidence of the senses of any worth. The involuntary life which includes all those phenomena of mind or body in their reciprocal relations that are independent of consciousness, or of will, or both, and which is seen in its extremest development in the full trance, is among the people understood but incompletely, is in truth least understood in its minor and ceaselessly operating phases. In his calmest, healthiest moments, man is a bundle of reflex actions; what is done by the will, purposively, voluntarily, being a fraction too small for measurement of his whole activity: in the brain thoughts come and go of their will more than ours; the mind is never wholly idle and never fully under control; in response to external or internal suggestion we are always cerebrating, and corresponding to our thoughts are muscular contractions and relaxations; when we think, we move. We are not always or usually conscious of our thoughts or of the bodily movements correlated to them; and oftentimes only by expert investigation can the latter be detected, the individual himself being of all persons the least able to analyze the activity of his own functions.

Our present knowledge of trance and of the involuntary life un-

locks half of the secrets of the world's delusions ; to spiritism its relations are numerous, and for specialists in this branch of cerebro-physiology and pathology who are also practically skilled in one of the most difficult of the arts—experimenting with living human beings—clearly demonstrable. Herein physiology finds in large part the scientific basis of those occult and absorbingly interesting phenomena that, before as well as since the birth of modern spiritism, have been at once the wonder, the terror, and the joy of mankind. It is this which causes the table to move beneath the hands of the expectant circles, performs the writing and varied motions of planchette, and makes the bell suspended from the hand strike the numbers of any known age or the hour of the day against the side of the jar by which it is environed ; it is this that turns the divining-rod, be it witch-hazel or any flexible thing whatsoever, and so deludes the operator into the conviction that he has found a vein of silver, or of gold, or of running water ; it is this that makes thought-reading a possibility, the operator so detecting the unconscious bodily tension and relaxation of the subject operated on as to trace the direction through long and intricate courses where his thoughts are concentrated, and to find, with precision, minute objects and limited localities, thus reading the mind through the body—mind-reading really being a misnomer for muscle-reading ; it is this that unfolds the marvels and all the genuine developments of trance orators and preachers, bringing their unwonted eloquence, their vagaries, and their caprices, under the dominion of natural law ; it is this, finally, that makes it easy, if not inevitable, that enraptured and entranced inquirers after tidings from departed loved ones should see their faces and hear their voices, in dreams, in the darkness of night, or in the dim light of organized *séances*.*

* Rappings may be physiological or pathological—voluntary or involuntary. In the case of one of my patients, an old gentleman of about seventy years of age, where I made the diagnosis of spinal meningitis, attacks of noisy rappings in the muscles of the legs would frequently come on, lasting for several minutes or longer. These raps, which were so loud that they could be heard with ease twenty or thirty feet, appeared to be caused by the sudden and involuntary muscular contractions of the muscles, especially the muscles of the thigh. The noise made by the raps resembled somewhat the snapping made by a tight string or rope when it is pulled, and they followed each other in rapid succession like a volley of pistol-shots, to the exceeding discomfort of the patient, who always suffered much pain during an attack, and indeed regarded them as an exacerbation of the disease. Sometimes the effect of trying to change his position would bring on the raps, and even passive disturbance would have the same effect. I have now under observation a patient with nervous disease who

The remaining support of spiritism—human testimony—like trance and the involuntary life—has hitherto been a mass of empiricism—a chaos, dark, formless, boundless, inaccessible to science, the hiding-place of all the follies of mankind ; to organize and reduce it to a science is the mission of neurology of the present and future.

On the principles of evidence as drawn from the testimony of human beings, it has thus far been undenied that the senses are worthy of trust, that the first quality of an observer and reporter is not expertness but honesty, and that what is good evidence for one class of claims is equally good for any class. These three assumptions—the common basis of law and logic—the neurology of the future must push utterly aside ; and in their place it will be established that in science or organized knowledge only the testimony of experts can be of value, and that the quality and amount of evidence needful to establish any claim must vary with, and be relative to, the nature of that claim. The rejection of non-expert human testimony is, and has ever been, the first step in the development of a science ; it is only by rejecting or ignoring all testimony save that of experts that any science is possible. Human testimony, indeed, handicaps mankind : it is a burden under which humanity, in its slow advance, has ever struggled and yet struggles.

Not out of the mouths of two or three witnesses nor of two or three millions, unless they be experts, can any great fact in science be established.

If average human testimony is to be received ; if the concurring voices of millions of honest, non-expert observers of even a high order of general intelligence, are to command the science of the world ; if a count of heads more than an estimate of their contents shall determine the convictions of men ; if quantity can be, in any degree, a substitute for quality, in the evidence out of which the edifice of human knowledge is builded ; if, in scientific discovery and observation, general acquirements shall serve in the place of special acquirements ; if instinctive morality can displace the scientific sense, and the willingness to tell the truth could always insure the capacity to tell it ; if the highest genius in one branch of science must give authority in another branch ; if the universality of a belief in matters of systematized knowledge gives even a pre-

can, at will and at any moment, without perceptible bodily agitation, produce easily-heard raps at the ankle-joint.

sumption in favor of the truth of that belief ; if the unanimous opinion of generation after generation of men is to be weighed against the demonstration of a single expert—then the world's follies are changed to wisdom and shadows to substance, and science is the one mistake of humanity ; then the real heroes are not Copernicus or Newton, but the astrologers, the necromancers, the persecutors of Galileo, and the monks of Salamanca, Mesmer and Reichenbach, Davis and Home ; and the pilgrimages of the future should be made, not to the tomb of Volta nor the Strada Felice of Bologna, the home of the discovery of Galvani, but to the historic rooms where “*odîc force*” was discovered, to the birthplace of mesmerism and mind-reading, the Witches' Hill at Salem, the house where spirit-rappings first appeared, the dens of medical alchemists, the retreats of the Highland seers, to that lonely dwelling of the Eddys beneath the shadow of the Green Mountains, where, in the presence of intelligent and trusting multitudes, were but lately performed, night after night, and month after month, the best-attested miracles of all human history.

The relief and cure of disease wrought through professed spiritual aid are usually genuine phenomena, the demonstrable and understood effects of mind acting on body. Mental therapeutics—the successful treatment of disease through the emotions of expectation, hope, and wonder—the turning of the patient's own mind on his disease—is now as clear a fact in medicine as hydro- or electro-therapeutics ; and for many cases, and especially for emotional organizations, is incomparably more powerful both for immediate and long-enduring effects. The definite expectation that such and such phenomena will take place in the body at such and such a time, however such expectation may be inspired, is competent to produce that effect, and without the aid of trance.

Not the unlearned alone and the dull, the feminine and immature and wonder-loving, are open to their influences ; scholarship, science, skepticism, dignity, and a well-balanced organization, are no certain proof against them ; they are tyrants whose subjects are found in every rank, in the university of learning as well as in the factory or dispensary.

Why modern spiritism chose America for its starting-point, and here reached its highest popularity, is a psychological inquiry the answer to which is chiefly found in the state of our nation's growth. America at the time of the Rochester rappings was entering its

mental puberty, passing from childhood into youth, feeling the throbs of new desires, champing impatiently for the race ; the home not so much of the abjectly ignorant as of the fractionally educated ; not of the raw, but of the underdone, the paradise of non-experts, who assumed that a perfect knowledge of a many-sided realm of thought is obtainable by an accidental glance at one side.

Three classes composed our society—preachers, politicians, and common people ; a fourth class of thinkers, rare enough in all times, and among all people, was yet to be recognized, and the few who aspired to enter this circle were harnessed in the service of delusions. Only the practical man was in honor, and practical men everywhere are the proper food of charlatans.

Of all the psychological questions relating to spiritism, no one perhaps is more interesting, or has been more puzzling than this—why so many well-balanced, scholarly, generally judicious, logical, and scientific men have either enlisted under its flag or have been hangers-on of its camp. But this fact is in no wise peculiar to spiritism ; delusions of all ages are seamed with the blunders of wise and noble men ; after witchcraft and alchemy were abandoned, if not forgotten, by the people and expelled from the peasant's cottage, they were sheltered and honored in the laboratory of scholars and the halls of colleges. To read a list of the members of the French Academy, of the Royal Society, and of all the learned organizations of Europe and America that have been bitten, maimed, and prostrated by spiritism, would be like a roll-call after a series of bloody battles. The recent trick of reading mind through involuntary muscular movement, the most remarkable fact in delusions since Mesmer's time, illustrated the same psychological principle. The mind-reading of Brown, from beginning to end, was the scholar's delusion, the special failing of the man of science and of letters, the idol on whose altars our first colleges and universities made haste to cast their crowns.

During the past two years have we not seen a bungling and incompetent trickster, who has to learn the rudiments of sleight-of-hand, to whom even the art of adroit deception, in any way, is yet to be taught, whose *séances* are as transparent as they are degrading—have we not seen Slade in his campaign across Europe making a breach in every citadel of learning that he has attacked and lining his pathway with wounded men of science ?

The answer to this problem is mainly this : that the logic of the

world is wrong, and the more closely we adhere to it the deeper we sink into error. The people save themselves by their instincts, but philosophers trained in logic are unwilling and ashamed, with all their intellectual pride, to become in their search for the truth as one of the lower animals. The watch that is accurately set and kept by some erroneous standard time is always wrong, while the one that is allowed to run down is sure to be right twice in twenty-four hours. The unscientific character of the accepted principles of evidence makes much of reasoning a paradox : through logic we become illogical ; the greater our knowledge the further we go astray ; once on the wrong road the faster we hasten, the more speedily we fall into destruction.

When men of scientific genius like Wallace, Crookes, and Zollner, or trained jurists like Judge Edmonds, or honored men of affairs like the late Superintendent of the New York Public Schools, suddenly or slowly become converts to a belief from which the masses in all directions are falling away, it is inevitable that thoughtful minds should seek for an explanation ; and it is also inevitable that the usual and accepted solution must be of a partial and one-sided nature. To attempt to solve this great problem by the charge of insanity, or of folly, in the general sense of that word, or of dishonesty, as is so often done, is both unjust and unscientific. While the main factor in the solution is found in the bad logic that has ruled and still rules the world—in the need which, in due time, will be supplied of a reconstruction of the principles of evidence—there are yet other elements that can not be omitted if we would make the solution complete. First of all, the faculty of wonder, which is the impelling force to all scientific discovery, may coexist with the very highest scientific and logical attainments. Other factors being the same, a commonplace man, without logic, or imagination, or education, or aspiration, would be less likely to be conquered by a delusion than a successful lawyer, or judge, or scientific discoverer ; for logical, well-trained, truth-loving minds, the only security against spiritism is in hiding or running away ; if they venture a fair and open attack, and are true to their convictions and the necessities of logic, they must unconditionally surrender. If Sir Isaac Newton were alive to-day, he would not unlikely be a convert to spiritism, for he was gifted, in a degree most marvelous, with those faculties of logic and wonder out of which, when united with non-expertness in psychology, scientific spiritualists are made ; and the amount of human testimony in favor of spiritualistic claims is a million-fold

greater than that in favor of the theory of gravity. The late Judge Edmonds used to say that he sifted the evidence of spirit manifestations just as he sifted the evidence in cases of law, and, in accordance with the same principles; and, from the standards of the law-books and the universities, his position was impregnable.

Amid all the excitement occasioned by the recent work of Mr. Kiddle on spiritual communications, no one has yet attempted to answer that portion of his preface in which he states that, unless we reject human testimony, the claims he advocates must be received; and, by the principles of evidence that all the lawyers, logicians, and scholars of the world have adopted and yet adopt, his reasoning is unanswerable. Those who attack spiritism with the logic of the schools will soon find themselves helpless, their weapons wrested from their grasp, and turned effectively against them. The logic of the universities and of the metaphysicians is now, and has ever been, on the side of delusions; the logic of the next generation will be on the side of truth, and then men of intellect will be able to meet the claims of spiritism logically and consistently, and will condemn it rationally on just philosophic grounds, as they now condemn it instinctively in spite of and against all the teachings of philosophy.

Of nearly equal psychological interest is the question why spiritism has so rapidly declined. Why is a faith once wellnigh universal, which a century ago was at least passively held by a majority of our citizens, now, after so many proofs of its truth, confined to a despised and diminishing sect? The advent of the Fox girls and table-moving marked, in this country, not the birth but the beginning of the death of the general popular belief in spiritism. True, the world has since resounded as never before with proofs and counterproofs relating to its claims; but delusions are always and have ever been most active in their decline. A fragment of matter impinging against the earth's atmosphere becomes a shooting-star, and rushes to its quick destruction with a great light and sound; meanwhile countless millions of these little worlds revolve through infinite space in silence and unseen; in all organic nature the play of the mechanism of normal, healthy life is noiseless, frictionless, painless; only with disease or death come agony and convulsion. Alchemy, astrology, witchcraft, animal magnetism, spiritism, clairvoyance, and mind-reading, striking in succession against modern

science, have become incandescent, and all the world is agaze at the conflagration.

When these delusions were universally believed and undisputed, men of science and letters simply passed them by, quietly assuming their truth; hence they fill but a small space in thought or literature: when the hand of death came upon them, their tremors began and increased until the whole earth has been shaken.

Of the various causes that have combined to overthrow spiritism, the exhaustive explanation of its phenomena through modern neurology is, without denial, the least important. No delusion of history, not even astrology, has been more completely elucidated by science than has spiritism; of no one of its facts or phenomena can it now be admitted that it is even mysterious; but for those condemned to this belief science comes too late to bring any redemption, but is rather like the reprieve that reaches the innocent man just after his execution—science appealing to the reason, and spiritism mainly to the emotions—they do not meet face to face, but pass each other, and both advance in their respective ways.

A new science, indeed, like that branch of the nervous system that relates to the trance, the involuntary life, and that complex product of the brain that we call human testimony, does not reach the consciousness as science, but rather is degraded into some aid or appanage to the delusion that it finds there, as in the telephone the waves of electricity are transformed into waves of air and reach the brain as sound.

For the average man, indeed, new sciences may graze the brain but do not enter, and leave the subject where they found him, with his feet fast in the stocks of his own ignorance. Knowledge is power; but in a limited time, near at hand, at short range, ignorance is a far greater power. Although through the long ages science may conquer, yet to-day superstitions, delusions, untruth, must be supreme. On young, loyal, truth-seeking minds, baffled by the former mysteries of spiritism, but open to ideas, the influence of the scientific explanation of those mysteries is doubtless great and yearly increasing, and already is making it hard to find recruits.

Ridicule, meeting spiritism on its own plane—the emotions—has been much more effective, temporarily, than science; hence the power of repeated exposures of mediums, although logically such exposures are no disproof of the abstract claim of spiritism. Similarly the charges of unpatriotism, impracticality, and of immorality,

continually hurled against spiritism, through the mediumship of the popular emotions, have much aided its swift decline, although they leave the logical arguments on the side of the delusion as strong as ever.

But the one cause of the decline of spiritism is general more than special—the evolution in modern society of the scientific spirit which, although not a special faculty, but a mode of operation of the faculties, is yet almost equivalent practically to the development of a new sense in man. This spirit, that enables its possessor to seek for truth through the intellect alone, without the interference of the emotions, though born in ancient Greece, has yet been so retarded in its growth that only until the past quarter of a century can it be said to have attained maturity in any considerable number of minds. The scientific sense enables one to utterly divorce the intellect and the feelings, so that each may pursue its own course, as on entering a depot the engine is switched off from the train. It is this sense that reverses the usual operation of the faculties, and makes the thought the father to the wish. It is this sense, in a word, that marks the high maturity of the mind, and which, indeed, if a man have not, he can not enter into the kingdom of science. It is the development of this new sense, the highest of which the human intellect is capable, more than any special discoveries or inventions, that is now overturning all the philosophy of the world. In Bulwer's bright romance of "The Coming Race" we are told that the rods loaded with Vril, when pointed at frightful monsters caused them to crumble to ashes. The Vril of the present day is this scientific sense, at the very presence of which all forms of delusion begin to wither.

From spiritism mixed good and evil have resulted to mankind ; the good, direct and indirect, probably outweighing the evil. Its worst evil, aside from its immoralities, has been, without doubt, the fostering of the unscientific spirit, the attempting to seek truth through the emotions rather than through the intellect, as though one should try to see with the ears, or to hear with the nerves of touch, and the opportunity it has given for breaking away from the just restraints of Christianity to those not psychologically prepared for such a change.

Indirectly spiritism has been of value far outrunning calculation, by supplying materials and inspiration for the solution of the world—long problems of trance and the involuntary life, and for the re-

construction of the principles of evidence, the crowning need of all philosophy. This honor it indeed shares with other delusions—witchcraft, alchemy, astrology, animal magnetism, clairvoyance, mind-reading, and “*odie force*”; but modern spiritism has the advantage of appearing later in the world, and at a time when science was prepared to utilize its copious resources. Spiritism is, indeed, a precious mine of psychology, the veins of which grow wider and richer the longer we work them.

In this as in all false belief we shall find, if we but search diligently and with expert eyes, that there is a law which, without shadow of turning, presides over men when they stumble and fall as well as when they unerringly win the race. Delusions in their dying enrich the soil in which new ideas take root, and whence they draw their sustenance and life. Thus it is that error is so often the parent of wisdom; and delusionists, by the very wildness of their folly, become the unconscious pioneers of truth and lead the leaders of science.

That spiritism was a suicidal religion, cutting its own throat in the very act of its birth, we have already noted, but, this fatal subjective quality aside, there was also an objective reason equally fatal to its permanent life: it came among a growing people and a rising civilization. A new religion to prosper must strike a nation on the down-grade, or when utterly down; for then, if ever, in the absence of science, the power of a belief in the supernatural is needed to take its place and furnish the stimulus by which mankind is to be energized and elevated. Buddhism or Mohammedanism planted in modern civilized Europe must have perished with its founders, and Christianity descending upon Greece and Rome in their strength and glory would have died away on the air of Palestine.

In the evolution of society, indeed, religion and science in a measure supplement each other: as one rises the other in the same class declines; inherently and persistently antagonistic, each one must yet fulfill its part in the development of the race. But to attempt to start a new religion in a scientific age like the present is like planting an orange-grove on an iceberg. If, in the far-distant future, spiritism should ever rise again, our civilization must first decline to meet it half way; in its modern form it is the religion for the temperate zone of humanity—for those who are neither very degraded nor very enlightened; the barbarian does not seek for more proofs of his faith—he has enough already; and the men of

science now know that the alleged proofs of spiritism are by physiology proved to be delusions. Of all the phases of religious belief in the world, modern spiritism is preëminently the religion of faith, the instincts of men that prefer believing to proving here also asserting themselves in a most extraordinary manner. Professing to be a religion of demonstration, it is practically a religion of the most humiliating trust, the Ultramontane Catholic reposing in the bosom of a Church whose dicta are beyond the reach of his own direct investigation, being in his most credulous moments a wonder of scientific incredulity in comparison with the victim of dark *séances*, where a slight movement of the hand, or a well-directed kick, would reveal, even to a non-expert, the baldness, the grotesqueness, and vulgarity of the performance by which he is about to be entranced. Modern spiritism is in fact the faith of those who are impatient with faith, and who are hungry to believe all that even appears to be anti-Christian.*

Of even more interest to some minds than any other problem suggested by spiritism will be, perhaps, the relations of delusions to sociology—their part in the complex machinery of nature. The necessity of a belief in the undemonstrable, or religion, will be questioned only by those who have studied but incompletely the psychology of man. Is not also the belief in the demonstrably false as necessary as it is universal? Is it possible for society to hold together without the cohesive force of some great delusion? Do not these three—science, superstition, and religion—constitute a trinity of influences which in their relation to human nature practically become unity? Are not the demonstrably true, or science, the demonstrably false, or delusions, and the undemonstrable, or religion, naturally and harmoniously united in the choral music of humanity? Is it conceivable that the area of science shall ever be wide enough to supply the wants of all classes and grades and environments—the bootblack, the shop-girl, the sailor-boy, to whom the fore-castle

* Some years ago the writer accepted, for the purpose of psychological experiment, an invitation to lecture on some points relating to the nervous system, before an audience made up largely of spiritists, Comtists, and “come-outers” of various schools. One effect of the discussion was to show, in a manner both interesting and ludicrous, that nearly every one in the audience had his pet delusion, the one feature common to all their beliefs being that they were demonstrably false. In leaving Christianity they had plunged in various directions, but always into a slough of superstition: in changing their faiths they had found, not liberty, but a new master, and the last was more cruel and unreasonable than the first.

is at once a school and a home, the bankrupt, the imbecile, the prisoner, the invalid in hopeless pain, the lad or maiden enslaved to wild emotions, the young mother by her first-born's grave? If the philosopher Bias was wise in asserting that "to wish for impossibilities is a mental disease," can it be allowed that any considerable number of men are, or ever will be, completely sane? For many, if not for the majority, has not error the highest of all allurements; and who would always exchange the impossible dreams of youth for the solid achievements of maturity? The difference between the adult and the child being only one of degree, and that but slight, are not bubbles of philosophy as necessary for the one as bubbles of water for the other? Are not delusions by their very hollowness all the better fitted to buoy up humanity, and float it over the rough waters until it shall reach the firm soil?

It being allowed that society must always have some form of delusion, what is likely to be the special delusion of the future? What phantom-ship is next to loom in the offing? In what direction are we to look for the mirage that is to cheat our brethren and allure our children and children's children?

As the oracle gave place to the astrologer, the astrologer to the alchemist, the alchemist to the witch, the witch to the magnetizer, the magnetizer to the clairvoyant, the clairvoyant to the medium, the medium to the mind-reader, upon whom now shall the spirit of the mind-reader fall? To whom shall this new arm of deception be revealed? Now that the involuntary life—the last conceivable stand of delusions—has yielded its treasures to science, it would appear that folly must hereafter carry on only a guerrilla war, that man's passion for the demonstrably false can only be gratified by searching in the *débris* of exploded delusions, and that in the absence of fresh material the old errors must be worked over and over again in the laboratories of emotion. To a thoughtful and philanthropic mind, recognizing that the direct influence of the demonstrably false in society is unspeakably great, as that of the demonstrably true, or science, is unspeakably small, we seem to be just now threatened with the possibility of a dearth of delusions, of a serious famine of charlatans in the land, wherein men will sigh in vain for the old enchantments, and cry aloud for some one to deceive them, and there shall be none to answer.

The experimental solution of this problem may already be going on in our very presence. In Germany, which in science and philosophy has given to the world more original and fruitful

thoughts than all other modern nations, the demonstrably false now exists only in occasional and limited survivals. Under the inspiration of the scientific sense all other lands are slowly becoming Germanized ; and, if this process should continue in the future as at present, the twentieth century will see, for the first time in the history of mankind, a civilization without an active and general delusion.

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